

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Kentucky's Writing Program: systematic approach to instructional ethics

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158.645, KRS 158.6453, KRS 158.6458, KRS 158.770, KRS 158.775, 703 KAR 5:010, and 703 KAR 5:080

History/Background:

Existing Policy. KRS 158.6453 sets forth the statutory requirements for the design and components of Kentucky's Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). Under this statute, the assessment program is to include an on-demand assessment of writing and writing portfolios consisting of samples of student work. This statute also required the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) to develop regulations to address the reduction of teacher and student time in preparing portfolios. The statute specified that these strategies may include but are not limited to "limiting time spent on a single portfolio entry, limiting the number of revisions, or collecting entries at different grade levels." Based on this requirement, the KBE established 703 KAR 5:010, the administrative regulation to reduce time spent on portfolios, which outlined procedures to address reduction of student and teacher time in preparing and scoring the writing portfolio.

While instructing writing, teachers are also guided by 704 KAR 3:303, the *Program of Studies for Kentucky's Schools* and by 703 KAR 5:080, the Administration Code for Kentucky's Educational Assessment Program. 703 KAR 5:080 incorporates by reference the guidelines for writing instruction and for scoring writing portfolios.

Over the past year the KBE has continued discussions on the design of the 2007 assessment of writing, effective instructional practices that result in competent and accomplished writers, professional development for teachers and administrators on writing practices, improvement in the code of ethics to reduce inappropriate practices in the field and specific issues related to the instructional time spent on portfolios. KBE finalized their decisions on the 2007 design for the writing assessment at their June 2005 KBE meeting. The next areas of focus were to improve the practices outlined in the "Code of Ethics" with the goal of reducing inappropriate practices and to design high quality professional development to improve the instruction of writing and the use of effective instructional practices.

During the October 2005 Kentucky Board of Education meeting, the KBE advised writing program staff to revise language in the "Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction" for clarity and to have the Office of Communications format the tool prior to

public release. The KBE also indicated an interest in supporting the document with a telecast that clarified the purpose of the document and the allegation process if a violation of the “Guidelines” were to occur.

The purpose of this staff note is to provide the KBE with a revised draft of the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction” (Attachment A) and a proposed plan to deliver professional development on instructional guidelines to all Kentucky educators. This background information is intended to provide the KBE with sufficient information to direct the work of the “Administration Guide” and Kentucky’s systemic approach to ensuring instructional ethics.

Administration Guidelines

The contents of the “Code of Ethics” for writing exists within the “Administration Code for Kentucky’s Educational Assessment Program” (703 KAR 5:080), and has been included as a separate document in the *Writing Development Teachers’ Handbook* so that all teachers will better understand guidelines for writing portfolio production. Although writing cluster leaders receive annual training in scoring practices and annual reminders of instructional guidelines, it is unknown how that training is redelivered at the local level.

In order to help educators clearly understand how the *Program of Studies for Kentucky’s Schools* (704 KAR 3:303), the administrative regulation to reduce time spent on portfolios (703 KAR 5:010), and the Administration Code for Kentucky’s Educational Assessment Program (703 KAR 5:080) pertain to writing instruction, the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction” was drafted.

The revised draft of the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction” more clearly indicates practices that are in violation of a regulation and will lead to allegations. The fourth column, “Examples of practices that are in violation,” clearly identifies practices that violate current regulations and identifies the regulation code(s) so that teachers and administrators can easily identify supporting regulatory documents. It also indicates that all violations will be processed according to 703 KAR 5:080.

Administration Guidelines Training

In addition to the informational sessions at numerous state conferences and meetings, the Kentucky Department of Education will deliver training on the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction” in the following manner:

1. Leadership Training:
 - a. Writing program staff will offer five three-hour training sessions to discuss the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction” and the three regulations that support the document. With the support of CTB McGraw-Hill, sessions will be offered on November 21 (Frankfort), 22 (Prestonsburg), 28 (Ky. Dam), 29 (Bowling Green), and 30 (London).

- b. All districts will be invited to send one representative to the state-level training. During the training session, participants will plan how to share the information from the session with school leadership and also with classroom teachers.
 - c. During the sessions, district leaders will also be given an opportunity to comment on the “Administration Guidelines” draft and to offer revisions as necessary.
- 2. Telecast:
 - a. Starr Lewis, Associate Commissioner for the Office of Teaching and Learning, and Pam Rogers, Associate Commissioner for the Office of Assessment and Accountability, have collaborated to develop a telecast that includes an overview of the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction” and a review of the allegation process.
 - b. This telecast will be aired via KET, enabling all schools and districts to copy and view the telecast. Cluster leaders and district assessment coordinators will receive notice of the airing schedule.
 - c. This telecast will also be used during the opening segment of the state-level training for the “Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction.”

Handbook Revision

During the October 2005 Kentucky Board of Education meeting, it was mentioned that the parent handbook, *Sharpen Your Child’s Writing Skills* (Attachment B), needed to be revised to better meet the needs of parents throughout Kentucky.

Since the KBE meeting, the Kentucky Writing Advisory Committee has formed an ad-hoc committee that will work throughout December and January to complete the revision of the parent handbook in addition to the *Writing Teachers’ Development Handbook*, the three writing portfolio scoring handbooks, and the “Tips for Parents” brochure (Attachment C).

Members of the committee discussed having the parent handbook reviewed by the Commissioner’s Parent Advisory Council during the revision process.

Because the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL) uses this handbook on an annual basis, writing program staff will ask CIPL leadership to review the revised document.

Writing Advisory members also recommended that KDE publish the next edition of the parent handbook in both English and Spanish.

Policy Issue(s) and Options:

- What are the Kentucky Board of Education's suggested revisions regarding the draft recommendations for the "Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction" and directions for dissemination of the Guidelines?
 - *KDE Recommendation:*
Staff recommends that the Board direct KDE staff to proceed with implementation of the attached revised version of the "Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction" and disseminate these through state meetings and conferences with educational stakeholders and partners, Cluster Leader Training and Materials, Cluster Leader Electronic Messaging System, KET programs, Kentucky Teacher and other appropriate print resources such as the District Assessment Coordinators Manual.
- Does the Kentucky Board of Education concur with requiring all teachers and administrators to receive training on the "Administration Guidelines for Writing Instruction" on an annual basis? If so, should KDE develop a certification document similar to the spring testing certification that will verify by the principal's and district assessment coordinator's signatures that the training has been completed? (All teachers and administrators are required to attend annual training about general testing practices, but they are not required to view a fall training that provides reminders of appropriate instructional practices.)
 - *KDE Recommendation:*
Staff recommends that all teachers and administrators be required to attend an annual fall training session that provides reminders of appropriate instructional practices and that a corresponding certification document be developed.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Writing instruction and program implementation must improve in all schools if students are to become proficient writers. Proficiency in other content areas also involves the student's ability to present an understanding and application of content knowledge. Although open-response questions are not scored according to writing criteria, a student who has the ability to formulate a written argument or explanation has a greater opportunity to receive high scores in all content areas.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

- National Technical Advisory Panel on Assessment and Accountability: encouraged KDE to clarify appropriate instructional practices.
- Writing Focus Group: suggested that KDE encourage schools to review appropriate instructional practices on an annual basis; requested that training be made available for administrators.
- Writing Advisory Committee: reviewed "Administration Guidelines" and asked clarifying questions; discussed handbook revision.

- Office of Leadership and School Improvement (KDE): Highly Skilled Educators requested that regulation codes be included in the “Administration Guidelines.”
- Office of Legal and Legislative Services (KDE): discussed the current types of allegations that are placed on the writing assessment; indicated that the “Administration Guidelines” will highlight practices that are in violation of the current regulations and may initially increase the number of allegations reported to KDE; reviewed draft of telecast and provided feedback.
- Office of Communications (KDE): reviewed “Administration Guidelines” and revised for publication purposes; collaborated with OTL and OAA to tape the “Administration Guidelines” telecast.
- Office of Assessment and Accountability (KDE): District Assessment Coordinators recommended that KDE not use the terms “ethical” and “unethical” when discussing instructional practices; District Assessment Coordinators also suggested that KDE continue to clarify language regarding appropriate writing conferences.

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